equivalent to forcing them by law to work for the benefit of private capitalists—a proceeding which they would quite rightly have resisted to the uttermost. Yet much of this work was at least as vital to our national safety as was the maintenance at full strength of our fighting forces. For them we could take men almost at will, fixing our own standards of age and physical fitness. For the home front we had to rely still on the voluntary system, reinforced in some measure by the provisions to which I have already alluded.

It was to deal with this very difficult but essential problem that on setting up my Ministry at the end

System of °^ I9[1]^ •"• decided to form a new

National Department of National Service. The

Service War Committee under the previous

decided on Government had already, as one of its last acts, approved in principle on 30th November, 1916, the introduction of a system of National Service, leaving the details to be worked out by a Committee, presided over by Mr. Montagu, then Minister of Munitions. The suggestion was that it should apply to all men up to 60 years of age, and possibly also to women. A first draft for a Bill to enact this system was prepared by the Committee, and came before the new War Cabinet on I4th December, 1916. I was away at the time, suffering from an attack of influenza. In my absence the War Cabinet shrank

from reaching any final decision on this complex and far-reaching subject, but gave a preliminary survey to the question and provisionally decided that :—

(a) A Director of National Service should be appointed who should be in charge both of the Military and Civil side of Compulsory National Service.